

## WASHINGTON CRITIC

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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THE CRITIC.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST.

For the District of Columbia, Delaware and Maryland.

Mild and pleasant; clearing weather; and

and slightly warmer; southerly winds.

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 24, 1890.

CONGRESS should have no difficulty in

fixing the law so that lottery agents

would be caught within its folds. Either

the Police Court should be empowered

to empanel a jury or the original juris-

diction of the Supreme Court should be

made clear and certain.

IF THE CHARGES which have been

made against the Civil Service Com-

missioners, and which are now under

investigation, are sustained, these gen-

tlemen should certainly be expelled.

THE CRITIC believes in a proper civil

service system, but it does not believe

in letting any guilty man escape.

WHAT A singular condition of things

is disclosed in the fact that, by reason

of the complication and inconsistency

of several acts of Congress, the police

of Washington are rendered powerless

to suppress the lottery business, which is

declared by law to be a misdemeanor,

or to bring to deserved punishment

lottery agents, who, in law, are misde-

meanants!

MR. WARNER says: "Do not assume

that our local government is poorly ad-

ministered." THE CRITIC has assumed

nothing of the kind. Indeed, it has

not assumed anything. It has given

undeniable facts to prove that there is

a great deal of unjust taxation in the

District, and that a new system is

needed to guarantee justice to the poor

as well as the potential.

MR. WARNER should remember that

THE CRITIC is striving to secure just

and honest taxation. It is making war

on no government, no class, no indi-

vidual. If the tax discrimination were

in favor of the small land-owners the

position of THE CRITIC would be pre-

cisely the same. It so happens that as

the case stands the rich and influential,

the large land-holders and speculators,

furnish the facts upon which THE

CRITIC bases its plea.

IT IS HINTED that collusion exists

between the Government and the

Alaska Commercial Company. This is

probably a most unjust insinuation.

However, it is a little singular that this

company, in making its bid of \$50,000

for the seal fisheries, accompanied it

with an unofficial offer "to cover the

highest bid of every other syndicate in

the field." If this is collusion, it is

an exceedingly peculiar business trans-

action for the Government of the United

States to participate in.

MR. WARNER says: "Property used

for purposes making necessary the pres-

ence and maintenance of a police force

cannot, under any correct principle, be

valued for taxation upon the same basis

as the attractive and costly residences

which are ornaments to the city." If

Mr. Warner here means to insinuate

that the rich do not owe as much to

police protection and service as the

poorer classes of the community, he is

entirely incorrect. If anything, they owe

proportionately more. Besides, common

people seldom have policemen detailed

to call guests' carriages at their recep-

tions, as is customary at the ornamental

residences of the West End.

PUBLIC OPINION.

There is no surer safeguard of hon-

esty in the administration of public

affairs than an enlightened public

opinion, which is now alert and ready

to bestow, according to the facts in the

case, either condemnation or approval.

Nothing more firmly sustains an ad-

ministrative official in the just and

conscientious discharge of duty than

the assurance of popular support; and,

in like manner, nothing so affects a

corrupt and unfaithful public servant

with a feeling of disquietude and dread

as the sense of widespread dissatis-

faction and general censure in regard to

his course of action.

As vigilance is the price of liberty, so

it may be said with equal truth that an

aggressive, self-assertive public senti-

ment is the condition of good adminis-

tration in a free community. Where

the conscience of the people slumbers

injustice grows bold and public wrongs

are committed with impunity. Where

public spirit decays and dies govern-

ment becomes corrupt, and where public

opinion keeps itself in abeyance or lies

dormant bad principles and methods

prevail in the management of public

affairs.

It is sometimes alleged that there is

in the District of Columbia nothing

which is properly entitled to be called

public opinion, unless it be our esteemed

contemporary, the Journal of that

name. By this it is not meant that

there are no individual opinions on

public questions. Just the contrary is

true, and they exist in very great abun-

dantly, because the average of intelli-

gence in this city is greater than that

of any other city in the country. For

this reason almost every citizen is fitted

to form an opinion, and he forms it,

too, with knowledge and judgment.

What is claimed is that these abun-

dantly individual opinions lack cohesion

and cannot be readily or effectively

massed; that there are no means of as-

certaining their consensus, and that,

even if it were ascertained, there is no

organized mode of giving it expression.

Elsewhere public opinion finds forceful

expression in the various elections

through which municipal and State

officers are chosen. But, on account of

the anomalous character of our Govern-

ment, that mode is not available here.

What should be done, then, to arouse

the attention of the citizens of Wash-

ington to matters in which they have a

common interest, and how can this

agreement of opinion be given intelli-

gently and effectively expression?

The success which has attended many

of the efforts of the "Committee of 100"

and its sub-committees in the sev-

eral districts of the city, shows what

may be done by voluntary associations

of citizens. Through their activity and

zeal the schools were saved from mis-

management and the present admirable

system established. In various ways

their influence has been felt in promul-

gating municipal reforms, and the ready

access which their delegated representa-

tives have had to the Congressional

District Committees presents an un-

official method by which expression

may be given to the wishes or griev-

ances of the people.

The main grievance of the city at

the present time is the unjust system

of assessment in vogue. It is unfair to all

classes, and should give place to an

adequate and impartial plan. This is

a matter which the "Committee of

100" and the several District associa-

tions should take up at once and push

vigorously to a speedy conclusion. If

they do not the people will have to as-

semble and organize and send their

representatives to Congress in their own

way, for nothing is more certain than

that the fraud by which the rich are

benefited at the expense of the poor

must cease.

NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOLS.

On a recent occasion Superintendent

Powell publicly stated a fact in regard

to the school system of this city which

is of grave significance. He said that

out of a school population of 51,000

there were 39,000 pupils in 31,000

classrooms, to accommodate whom all available

school-rooms were severely overtaxed

and injuriously overcrowded. The

meaning of this statement is that, in

the District of Columbia, there are 18,-

000 children for whom no public

schooling is provided, and that for

many thousands of those who have

been admitted to the schools the pro-

vision is altogether inadequate.

Our neighbor and esteemed contem-

porary, the *Sunday Gazette*, yesterday

published a number of interesting inter-

views with members of the Board of

Trustees in regard to this matter. They

all complain of lack of school accom-

modations. This lack was so pressing

last year that \$14,832 was paid for

twenty-four rented buildings and thirty-

eight rooms necessarily ill-fitted for

school work. Notwithstanding the ad-

ditional room thus secured, over 200

could not be accommodated for only half-

cost tuition.

The High School is so overcrowded

that there, too, half day tuition has to

be adopted to a considerable extent. To

relieve the pressure on this institution

it is proposed to erect two additional

High Schools—one in West and the

other in East Washington. This relief,

however, cannot immediately be effected

for lack of funds.

In addition many of the older school-

houses and all the rented buildings are

ill-ventilated, defective in plumbing

and sewerage and detrimental to health.

Yet, in full view of all these facts,

the District Appropriation bill as passed

by the House allows for new sites and

schoolhouses \$89,000 less than last

year, the trouble being that as the need

increases the appropriation diminishes.

Why Congress should deal in this

slender fashion with the schools of the

District passes beyond comprehension.

Economy is commendable, and it is the

duty of Congressmen to scrutinize

closely every scheme that threatens to

deplete the Treasury. But schools are

not questionable schemes. The schools

of the District largely depend for their

efficiency on the liberality of Congress,

and they are at least entitled to a just

support.

The only resource left to remedy the

evil state of things referred to and to

increase the appropriation is an appeal

to the Senate for an amendment of the

bill. This appeal is to be made, and it

is to be hoped that it will prove suc-

cessful. The Senate does not need to be

told that money spent on schools is

money well expended. Education is not

only a necessity of our time, but

against the evils that loom up threaten-

ingly over the horizon of modern civiliza-

tion the free scope of a wider and

more general education is the only de-

fense in sight.

THE MERIT SYSTEM.

It ought always to be kept in mind

that, in discussing modes of appoint-

ment to the civil service of the Govern-

ment, most of those who advocate

the merit system as being immensa-

bly fairer, more satisfactory and more

suitable than the old patronage system,

do not commit themselves to any sup-

port of the present Civil Service law or

of its regulations and its administra-

tion. It would, indeed, have been strange

if the first legislative attempt in that

direction had proved at all points a suc-

cess, and if the law and the system

have been shown to be crude and de-

fective in many respects, it is only

what might fairly have been expected.

One difficulty with which the Civil

Service law has had to contend from

the beginning—and is now contending

—has arisen from the fact that its op-

ponents, the politicians, who regard

the office simply in the light of a fair

election reward, never gave it a fair

chance. They did not look for the

good that was in it. They only saw

what was bad. They did not want to

see that, by successive amendments and

corrections suggested by experience, it

might develop into a practical and sat-

isfactory system.

But the popular mind takes little in-

terest in quibbles about the law's

defects or the jarring of the ma-

chinery of its administration. It takes

the sensible view that the law may be

amended and its administration im-

proved. The mind of the people, how-

ever, is very clear about one thing, and

that is, that the merit system must

be retained. To the Civil Service law

belongs the credit of beginning what

in principle is a revolution in the system

of appointments, and it is a revolution

that will never go backward. *Nolla**redigere.*

The thorough amendment of the law,

indeed, is quite in order, and it will,

doubtless, be undertaken at the earliest

opportunity. But even if it should be

amended to such an extent as to em-

body the principle which will prevail only